Washington, DC
New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS)

New Leaders for New Schools (New Leaders) designed the Effective Practice Incentive Community (EPIC) to identify and provide incentives to school leaders and practitioners who have implemented effective practices that help drive student achievement gains and are willing to share those practices with educators across the country. New Leaders is working with the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), with the Together Everyone Achieves More (TEAM) program, to identify which DCPS schools have the highest student achievement gains. Through EPIC, effective education practices will be identified and documented on an online knowledge system that will be accessible to all DCPS educators, all schools in the EPIC grants, and eventually to all educators nationwide.

Needs Assessment Results and General Information

In the DCPS, over half of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. On the 2005 NAEP, only 11 percent of 4th grade students scored proficient in reading, and only 9 percent scored proficient in mathematics. Secondary students scored similarly, with only 12 percent scoring proficient in reading, and 7 percent scoring proficient in mathematics. In 2007, the DC Council approved placing DCPS under mayoral control.

Mayor Adrian Fenty quickly installed Michelle Rhee as the new Chancellor, and together they committed themselves to reforming the school system. During the 2007-08 school year, Chancellor Rhee offered early retirement packages to teachers and closed 23 schools for the 2008-09 school year. Although DCPS schools have made significant gains on the state assessment test (DC-CAS), less than half of the students reached proficiency levels in both reading and math on the 2008 tests. The graduation rate has increased slightly from 66.2 percent in 2006 to 67.9 percent in 2007.

Background

Like other award models, the EPIC model of differentiated compensation recognizes the paramount importance of student achievement performance in evaluating educators. What makes EPIC unique, however, is that awards are provided to educators in exchange for sharing their effective practices with other educators in their school, district, and nationwide. EPIC provides the leadership opportunity for awarded educators to make available to their colleagues those practices that contributed to the achievement gains made by their students. Led by SchoolWorks, Effective Practice Teams visit award-recognized schools to identify practices for documentation and sharing based on protocols developed with New Leaders and DCPS. Such practices cover a broad spectrum of topics and may include curricular and instructional strategies, allocation of resources within a school, and professional development approaches. Through this practice-sharing focus, EPIC aspires to improve student achievement both in our partner districts and charter schools and

School Data measured by DC-CAS	Criteria to meet on 2007 and 2008 DC-CAS
Proficiency <80% in all tested subjects	Increase 20+ percentage points in BOTH reading and math
If proficiency = 80.0%–89.9% in any subject	Proficiency must increase to 100% in that subject
If proficiency = 90.0%–99.9% in any subject	Proficiency must increase to 100% in that subject AND the "advanced" rate must increase by 10+ percentage points

in other districts and charter schools throughout the country by offering free access to these practices through a robust online community.

Under the leadership of Chancellor Rhee, DCPS is examining and revising the district's human capital and professional development strategies. She is also proposing to incorporate EPIC as a key strategy to retain and attract high-performing educators and serve as a key resource for the professional development of the broader DCPS community. To that end, the program was officially recast as the EPIC/TEAM program (Together Everyone Achieves More).

Incentives

For Year 2 and Year 3, the program is setting high thresholds of gains in proficiency as the criteria for receiving an EPIC/TEAM award, deferring use of a value-added model (VAM) to better integrate with the more comprehensive pay-for-performance program that the district is planning. These thresholds are explained in the above table.

Schools meeting the minimum improvement threshold are identified as EPIC/TEAM award-recognized schools. All instructional staff in these schools receive $8,000, and principals and assistant principals in these schools receive awards of $10,000 and $9,000 respectively. As with all EPIC programs, school leaders

and teachers are identified based on school-level achievement gains and their willingness to document and share effective practices. The TEAM program also provides awards to non-TIF-eligible staff in EPIC-recognized schools because one of the goals of TEAM is to acknowledge that every staff person contributes to student success.

Resources

TIF grant funding was awarded at a level of 43 percent of the projected program costs, including performance/practice incentives. In addition to the TIF grant funds, New Leaders and DCPS will match $3.3 million total. New Leaders has secured $9.3 million in private support for the EPIC program nationally and is working to raise additional funds to support the operations of EPIC.

Data Systems

Student information, including grades and standardized test scores, resides on DC STARS (Student Tracking and Reporting System). In addition, a new school-level database, Schools DataLink, will be launched in late August or early September 2008. The state education agency, OSSE, is coordinating the efforts for the SLED (statewide longitudinal education data warehouse) in which DCPS student-level data will also reside. DCPS is also launching a new special education data system,

Easy IEP. DC STARS and the two new systems (DataLink and Easy IEP) will include new dashboards that will allow central office, schools, and even parents to access important school and student data.

Year 2 Activities

EPIC's second year saw the successful pilot of a complete cycle of the EPIC program in DCPS, in which almost 100 educators from three DCPS elementary schools were awarded just under $500,000. The second year also brought a realignment of the EPIC program within DCPS to better support the human capital strategy being created by the district's new turn-around leadership team. The program set high thresholds of gains in proficiency as the criteria for receiving an EPIC/TEAM award, deferring use of a value-added model (VAM) to better integrate with the more comprehensive pay-for-performance program that the district is planning. In the second year, the three award-recognized schools all increased the percentage of their students who are proficient in both reading and in math by 20 percentage points. The awards given under TEAM were provided to all adults in identified schools and required a high level of private and district funding to support non-TIF awardees.

Though the method for identifying the highest gain schools was different, the EPIC/TEAM program followed the cycle of activity common to all EPIC programs—identifying schools with the highest level of gain; creating the processes for and then awarding eligible educators within these schools; creating, testing, and revising the protocol for identifying effective practices (with SchoolWorks) and then documenting these practices in differentiated formats, including rich video treatments and written case study methods; and

developing approaches to professional development within the district to encourage use of the practices available via the EPIC online knowledge system. Evaluation work was also launched in Year 2 with a Mathematica-designed survey of 109 principals and assistant principals. Finally, after developing expected "use case" scenarios, research, testing, piloting, and site build out were completed for the first iteration of the EPIC online knowledge system.

Outlook for Year 3

After launching the EPIC online knowledge system at the end of Year 2, New Leaders will begin Year 3 by populating the system with three effective practices from DCPS award-recognized schools and another 59 practices from our other partner districts and charter schools across the country. In August 2008, New Leaders and DCPS awarded our second cohort of winners, which included approximately 250 educators from six schools receiving over $1 million. We will continue to identify and document effective practices from this coming year's award winners and begin integrating EPIC effective practices into DCPS-led and New Leaders-led professional development for both the entire DCPS community of school leaders and the subset of that community that are New Leaders principals and assistant principals. Additionally, Mathematica will begin collecting and analyzing student achievement data in order to create a value-added model for identifying high-performing DCPS schools and educators for the third cohort of award winners, and they will begin visiting EPIC-eligible DCPS to write case studies as a part of our program evaluation.

Center for **Educator Compensation Reform**